

Mary Lupien

Candidate for Rochester City Council

East District

- Name one issue on which you disagree with the current administration and why.

I disagree with the administration on the issue of using “dynamic staffing” of fire stations. This is meant to save on overtime by temporarily closing certain stations for a shift. However, closing stations would lead to a reduction of service and longer wait times. Firefighters don’t just fight fires, they are on the front lines as first responders as well. In an emergency, minutes can mean the difference between life and death. This is a huge safety issue for our community.

- What is the most important issue facing your district, and what is a specific proposal or action you propose to address it?

Extreme and systemic poverty is the greatest challenge facing our city. When I talk to residents of the East District I am inspired to hear that the majority recognize we must work together at the neighborhood, school, and municipal levels to solve Rochester’s poverty issue.

However, poverty isn’t a single stand-alone issue to solve. Poverty is perpetuated by many co-existing challenges; but most often at its foundation is the lack of stable, quality and affordable housing. From my own experience in the community and in the city school district, as well as in research, quality affordable housing is shown to be the foundation for individuals and families to build their livelihood. Housing stability supports students’ steady growth, provides the opportunity for individuals to build personal stability, and creates stronger connections and networks of support in our neighborhoods.

We must opt-in to the state housing policies of good cause eviction protection and rent regulation, if passed, to keep residents in their homes, as well as focus city investment on the creation of more quality, affordable housing options.

- Please identify one area in the city budget where you think the city should commit more resources than is currently proposed and why.

With only 12 years left to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions to mitigate the worst effects of climate change, the City of Rochester needs to move much more quickly to address the climate crisis. We must commit more resources to make the switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy as well as invest in energy efficiency upgrades to residences and buildings. This will ultimately reduce our city's budget expenses and create more good-paying green jobs.

- What policies would you pursue to address housing affordability, evictions and/or landlord-tenant relations in your district?

I go into a lot of detail on this on my website:

<http://www.marylupien.com/ourplatform#housing>

- If passed at the state level, opt-in to Good Cause Eviction Protection and Rent Regulation
- Exercise the city's existing power to make repairs on health and safety issues that negligent landlords are refusing to make.
- Invest in Community Land Trusts: that give communities the ability to control the sale of land and thus control the housing market in an area by creating permanently affordable housing options through ground leases and a restriction of resale values.
- Invest in truly affordable housing: - We must question how affordable is defined. When the Area Median Income (AMI) of the county is used, 60%-80% of AMI is unaffordable to city residents in need. We need more

housing at the 30%-50% range and project based Section 8 units.

- Increase access to home loans: - Programs to work with renters who have lower credit scores and income, but can pay high rents every month to allow them access to home loans
 - Create incentives for landlords to improve and provide affordable rents
 - Give preferred developer status to community entity like land trusts, tenant union or neighborhood groups
 - Encourage Cooperative ownership - Make Cooperative ownership more accessible through special programs as a way to make ownership accessible to more people and lower the cost of living. Incentivize developers to finance co-op projects in addition to or instead of tax breaks for building new
 - Use the power of Eminent Domain to reclaim houses from speculative, absentee landlords - This would be very controversial but there is precedent with this being successful with the Dudley St. Initiative
 - Change the City Auction to give preference to neighbors, land trusts and neighborhood organizations so they can buy auction houses.
- Will you vote for the Police Accountability Board as proposed in November – why or why not?

Yes. I have been advocating for the Alliance's proposal at almost every city council meeting, and I am a representative to the alliance for Mothers Out Front. I believe in a citizen-led Police Accountability Board with the ability enforce a range of disciplinary actions. For too long the police have policed themselves. An accountability board with the power to discipline will decrease incidents of police misconduct, increase trust in the community and ultimately more community trust will help the police to do their jobs better.

- Do you support Mayor Warren's push for a referendum calling for removal of the elected school board in favor of a state takeover of RCSD/appointed board, and why?

I do not support the referendum calling for state takeover and removal of our elected board. The community has been provided no state plan of action. As a parent and educator in the district, there is no question in my mind that we need to make significant changes in order to give our children a better education. However, I don't believe that disenfranchising Rochester's citizens and taking away the power of parent voices in the process is the answer.

The data shows that state takeovers nationwide have produced the same or worse academic outcomes for students and in many cities like New Orleans and Philadelphia it has opened the door to an explosion of charter schools and a weakening of the public school system. There are many ways in which the city, county and an elected school board can work together to implement the Distinguished Educator's recommendations to bring about systemic change and create an environment where our children can thrive.

- What current policy or practice of city government would you seek to change if (re)elected, and why?

I would change administration's over reliance on large subsidized projects instead of balanced investment in historically disinvested neighborhoods. The housing section of the 2034 plan speaks to revitalizing and strengthening "middle market areas." I would suggest that investing in these "middle" neighborhoods would only speed up the displacement we are seeing due to gentrification in areas like Beechwood. Instead we should focus on reinvesting in our largely forgotten neighborhoods that need it the most.